

Connections Newsletter with Pastor Mark Manning

“Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. As they were going along the road, they came to some water, and the eunuch said, ‘Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?’ He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and he eunuch, went down to the water, and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more and went on his way rejoicing.” - Acts 8:35-39

At what point does all this disappearing and re-appearing of Jesus seem a magic act? When is it more like going to Las Vegas, to one of the established Magician Shows where you know you will see some pretty incredible stuff, but you’re not really surprised, after all you expect it! Didn’t it happen just like this on the day of the resurrection when Jesus appeared to two men returning to Emmaus? He explained the scriptures, and instead of baptizing, Jesus broke bread with them and then—disappeared! Later the same day, the men return to Jerusalem to tell the disciples about Jesus and—he appears, explaining everything about himself in scriptures! Now, Philip is explaining the scriptures to a visiting foreigner from Africa, a Eunuch from the court of a foreign dignitary. Instead of “breaking bread together,” from Philip’s explanations the Ethiopian perceives that he wants to be baptized--and so they do at the nearest moment available—and Philip disappears! But one thing remains: JOY!



Remember that in all our reading and learning and preaching, the goal is not so much understanding, although that comes. The true goal is JOY in the presence of the Risen Christ! Either in Holy Communion (breaking of the bread) or Baptism, it’s not magic, but joy-in-the-promise-come-true. [\(click here or the image above for a short video message\)](#)

Prayer: Risen Christ, by the power of your Holy Spirit, surprise us with your presence and bring us the joy of your promises come true. Amen.

[Click Here for a Short Video Message from Pastor Mark](#)

Questions for Discussion/Reflection:

- 1. It seems obvious to us that scripture is about Jesus Christ; but remember that is not the case for first-century Jews. How much convincing would they need to see their ideas and hopes finally embodied in a person who died on a Cross?*
- 2. Someway, somehow in Philip’s explanation of scripture, the Ethiopian Eunuch perceived that he needed to be baptized? What do you think it finally took to convince him?*
- 3. “What is to prevent me from being baptized?” is an interesting statement. What bars to acceptance do you think the man saw or perceived? Being African? Being a eunuch? Being from a different culture? Being a Gentile (even though he is a believer)?*
- 4. What “prevents” people from entering our fellowship? (Hint: it is not what we put up, but what they feel and perceive...)*
- 5. Have you ever experienced the “joy” of Christ’s presence after the fact? Have you (like the men from Emmaus) had your hearts burn not knowing why?*